

Sheepmen on last week's market saw feeder lambs go off a dollar per hundred. The already weak ewe market took a similar fall. To continue my reputation as a patron of the sheep feeding and packing industry, I shipped half the ranch's lambs to honor the slump. Since the lambs were worked in town, I spent several days watching the people in the San Angelo marketing area.

Judging from the pencil deduction on the ranch's lamb weight sheet, I now feel that I was being watched too. Mind readers of international fame cannot match the lamb hagglers at reading the urgency on a rancher's face. Telephone tapping would be a dead issue if sheep traders investigated criminals.

I found during the week that the buyers were holding up better under the decline than the sellers were. A small clique of feedlot representatives and packer employees did their best to conceal their gloom over the first break in the spring and summer season. The group congregated in one section of the auction ring, and high school boys on a field trip couldn't have duplicated their rib-pounding gayety.

Men thrown into the stress of battle couldn't have kept up a braver front. At mid-point in the special lamb sale, a buyer for a feedlot in Central Texas took over the auctioneer's microphone and did a first rate job of imitating the sound of horses running on a hard track. His colleagues were cheering him on by the first imaginary lap. Consignors didn't laugh, but he made a big hit with the buyers' row. I guess some people would be amused if they heard that there was going to be a fertility dance out at the old folk's home.

This was the first floor show I'd ever seen at an auction ring. Terminal markets may have plans to start booking entertainers, for all I know. At this very moment jugglers and dog acts may be going under contract.

Livestock merchandising methods are continuously under study. Fall could find the calf sale days featuring a chorus group doing dancing and singing at lunch time. I don't think magicians, however, would be very popular in the trading circles. On nearly any sale day you can find a surplus of the old hocus pocus around those spots without even looking. Livestock traders might be a little slow pulling a white rabbit out of a silk hat, but you wouldn't want to bet that they couldn't slip the same rabbit in a truckload of mixed lambs. Those boys don't advertise their tricks, yet they are no slouches at all when it comes to black or white magic.

Indians called June the month that the bread was cast upon the whirlpools. Redmen who sold arrowheads in the opening summer months were considered to be fools. Projectiles, you see, moved at a brisk pace while it was cool enough to fight. Dumbheads who marketed their product after the spring campaigns lost more wampum than an eel fisherman using a worn-out net. Smart operators aimed at the spring market. Early shippers were the constant winners.

Auction ring owners haven't said whether they are going to feature the impersonation of the horserace every sale day. Should they bill any performers, it'll be in the newspapers. Vegas may find some stiff competition by the end of the year. Once a livestock peddler gets an idea, he goes for it in a big way.

June seems to be a lot better month for love song writing than lamb selling. I just wonder how long it took the Indians to learn to stay off the summer markets.